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DOI:

[10.1017/S0018246X16000030](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X16000030)

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Citation for published version (APA):

Nicholls, J. C. (2016). Empire and internationalism in French revolutionary socialist thought, 1871-1885. *HISTORICAL JOURNAL*, 59(4), 1051-1074. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X16000030>

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EMPIRE AND INTERNATIONALISM IN FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST THOUGHT, 1871-1885

This article explores the role of colonialism and internationalism in French revolutionary socialist thought at the beginning of the Third Republic. Whilst French revolutionary socialists frequently employed colonial examples and operated within wider traditions of either imperialism or anticolonialism, the concept of 'colonialism' itself remained vague and undefined in their thought. Previous literature on the subject has focused overwhelmingly on the writings of Communards deported to New Caledonia in the 1870s, however this article argues that the deportees in fact remained theoretically unconcerned with colonialism. Rather, it was those who remained in Europe that produced more clearly elaborated theories on empire and international engagement. Such ideas subsequently served to demarcate the limits and possibilities of universal equality and solidarity, which were central to revolutionary socialist thought in this period. Consequently, it shall be suggested that despite their recent rise in popularity, empire and colonialism are not the best categories of analysis for approaching such themes, for they cannot be isolated from broader concerns with international and transnational thought.

In an article of June 1883, the radical journalist and politician Tony Révillon expressed his desire that 'our sailors in Madagascar force respect for our flag through cannon fire. Let our explorers create *comptoirs* in the Congo. Nothing could be more legitimate.'¹ Révillon's article captured the spirit of many republicans' recently acquired imperial fervour. Although France had been a power abroad for well over 100 years, the beginning of the Third Republic in September 1870 marked a new phase in its colonial expansion. Whereas previous imperial exploits, whether in India or in Russia, had often been defined by failure, the Third Republic approached imperial expansion with a renewed vigour and sense of purpose. It looked to rescue empire from its Bonapartist connotations and invest it with a new meaning by conquering new territories, bringing glory to France and civilisation to far-flung countries. For politicians such as Jules Ferry and writers like Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, the establishment of an extensive empire and the dissemination of French ideas was not just a right, but a moral duty.² France's own well-

¹ 'Ce qui se passe', *Le Citoyen*, 10 June 1883.

² See P. Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (Paris: Guillaumin et Compagnie, 1882. First published, 1874).

being was thus intimately tied to this mission, and imperialism represented a sign of faith in republican government.³

Despite this conjuncture of republicanism and imperial fervour, one group of vocal republicans are often overlooked in the literature on French empire. Socialists and revolutionaries have been notable largely for their absence from studies of imperialism in the early Third Republic.⁴ Raoul Girardet's *L'Idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* does not touch upon revolutionary socialists at all,⁵ while works that do such as Charles-Robert Ageron's *L'Anticolonialisme en France de 1871 à 1914* have tended to focus upon the period after 1885.⁶ Similarly, despite the increasing importance of empire in political rhetoric and metropolitan culture during this period, historians of the revolutionary movement have rarely engaged with imperialism. Several recent studies have approached late nineteenth-century French socialism as an international movement, however these historians have rarely looked beyond Western or institutional boundaries of organisations such as the First International.⁷ While for historians of the twentieth century, anticolonialism and socialism have often seemed natural bedfellows, for those of the nineteenth, revolutionary socialism and ideas of empire rarely collide. This lack of extant

³ A.L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilise: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p.2.

⁴ R. Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); Conklin, *A Mission to Civilise*; A.L. Conklin, S. Fishman, R. Zaretsky, *France and its Empire since 1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For exceptions to this rule, see M.K. Matsuda, *Empire of Love: Histories of France and the Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); S.A. Toth, *Beyond Papillon: The French Overseas Penal Colonies, 1854-1952* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); C.J. Eichner, 'La citoyenne in the world: Hubertine Auclert and feminist imperialism', *French Historical Studies* 32:1 (2009), 63-84.

⁵ The closest Girardet comes are several mentions of Henri Rochefort. R. Girardet, *L'Idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* (Paris: Éditions de la Table Ronde, 1972), p.54; p.61.

⁶ The first socialist text presented by Ageron dates from 1885. C.-R. Ageron, *L'anticolonialisme en France de 1871 à 1914* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1973), p.38; pp.70-71.

⁷ M. Cordillot, *Aux origines du socialisme moderne: la Première Internationale, la Commune de Paris, l'exil: recherches et travaux* (Paris: Éditions de l'Atelier/Éditions ouvrières, 2010); R.C. Stuart, *Marxism at work: Ideology, class and French Socialism during the Third Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

literature may give the impression that in fact there was no substantive link between the two.

What little work has been done on the relationship between French revolutionary socialists and imperialism during this period has focused almost exclusively upon deportation.⁸ Following the fall of the Paris Commune in May 1871, around 4500 convicted Communards were sentenced to deportation and, between 1872 and 1876, exiled to New Caledonia; a French territory in the South Pacific colonised in 1853. It was not until the granting of a full amnesty on 14 July 1880 after a lengthy campaign that the majority of *condamnés* were able to freely return to France. While this is of course both a fruitful and illuminating avenue of study, the specific focus upon ex-Communards in New Caledonia rather than their relationship to more general ideas of imperialism and colonialism has done little to dispel the idea that there was no such relationship. The emphasis of this body of work on social history and day-to-day life in exile has inadvertently separated this experience from the revolutionary socialists' intellectual activities, and thus leaves their ideas on imperialism unexamined.

Contrary to what this historiographical lacuna may suggest, though, French revolutionary socialist thought in this area ranged far beyond the topic of deportation. Ideas of empire and internationalism were both more prevalent and more prominent in French revolutionary socialist thought at the beginning of the Third Republic than has previously been suggested. Far from being confined to New Caledonia and the deportees' experiences there, they were in fact both prominent in certain European circles of revolutionaries, and closely intertwined with other areas of their thought, most notably the nature of the relationship between the community, the State, and the world at large. Compared to themes like electoral participation and revolutionary violence,

⁸ J. Baronnet & J. Chalou, *Communards en Nouvelle-Calédonie: Histoire de la déportation* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1987); G. Mailhé, *Déportations en Nouvelle-Calédonie des communards et des révoltés de la grande Kabylie (1872-1876)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994); A. Bullard, *Exile to Paradise: Savagery and Civilization in Paris and the South Pacific, 1790-1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

such ideas occupied relatively little space in the texts of this period. It is not my intention, however, to suggest that they were central to contemporary revolutionary socialist ideas, but rather to begin to explore and elaborate a previously overlooked avenue of thought.

This article aims to explore French revolutionary socialist ideas on empire and internationalism between 1871 and 1885, and begin in turn to resituate these ideas within their wider patterns of thought. It shall take a dual approach, exploring the ideas of the exiles as well as those who remained in Europe through some of the most widely read deportee memoirs and newspapers, and two widely read European revolutionary newspapers from the 1870s and early 1880s. Contrary to what has been suggested in the secondary literature, it shall be argued that the deportees were far from the only outlet for ideas on relations with the non-West. In fact, they remained largely ambivalent to imperialism, focusing instead upon using their experiences in New Caledonia to reconstruct a community that was at once revolutionary and politically viable. It is instead to those who remained in Europe that one must look for more clearly elaborated theories on empire and internationalism. Such themes were not extrinsic to the main body of revolutionary thought, but were often closely imbricated with other ideas, and they frequently served to demarcate the limits and possibilities of concepts such as universal equality and solidarity that were fundamental to revolutionary socialist thought during this period.

In *By Sword and Plow*, Jennifer Sessions noted that domestic and imperial politics were often so ‘intimately intertwined’ in post-Revolutionary France that they ‘became one’.⁹ In the case of French revolutionary socialist thought at the beginning of the Third Republic, however, this intimate braiding of concerns did not end and the frontiers of

⁹ J.E. Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp.324-25.

the French overseas empire.¹⁰ Revolutionary socialist thought concerning the wider world during this period was markedly not confined to meditations on or interactions with empire. Rather, it frequently transcended and disregarded imperial frameworks, and this is both historically and historiographically striking. This nuanced relationship with such ideas visualises the considerable ambiguities surrounding ideas on empire and the morality of conquest in a period of 'high imperialism'. Meanwhile, the frequency with which revolutionary socialists looked beyond the boundaries of empire raises questions about the utility of 'empire' and 'the colonial' as categories for analysing the multifarious ways in which Europeans interacted with the wider world in this period.

I

It is perhaps unsurprising that deportation should form the basis for studies of the relationship between revolutionary socialism and French overseas expansion during this period, for the Communard deportations were an international sensation. The late nineteenth century saw the publication of a raft of memoirs, from both well-known and more obscure deportees.¹¹ Newspapers competed for exclusive interviews with the journalist and deportee Henri Rochefort following his sensational escape in 1874, and in 1881 the event was immortalised in paint by Édouard Manet. Deportation also carried significant political weight. The aforementioned amnesty campaign haunted French politics both in the press and the Chamber during the 1870s, with the full amnesty

¹⁰ For 'braided concerns', see U.S. Mehta, 'Edmund Burke on empire, self-understanding, and sympathy', in S. Muthu (ed.), *Empire and Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 155-183, at p.166.

¹¹ D. Armogathe, 'Le testament de Louise Michel', in L. Michel, *Souvenirs et aventures de ma vie* (ed.) D. Armogathe (Paris: La Découverte/Maspero, 1983), 11-20, at p.11.

eventually – and grudgingly – granted by the Opportunist government shortly before an election campaign that it had been forecast to dominate.

Deportation placed the Communards on the frontline of colonial encounter. The French government were keen to transform the Communards into colonial settlers, and the deportees' families were even encouraged to join them in New Caledonia.¹² Furthermore, the deportees made a number of foreign acquaintances, from the indigenous Kanak to Algerian political prisoners.¹³ Perhaps as a result of this, many scholars who have researched deportation have to some extent attempted to divine a stance on overseas expansion in the deportees' thought. Germaine Mailhé, Jean Baronnet and Jean Chalou, for example, have expressed disbelief at the collaboration between certain Communard deportees and the French colonial administration during the 1878 Kanak rebellion, suggesting a tacit expectation that the deportees forgo national ties in favour of a putative anti-colonial or revolutionary solidarity.¹⁴ Alice Bullard, meanwhile, has argued that initial interest in cross-cultural interaction quickly faded, with the deportees ultimately coming to define themselves as 'French' through the affirmation of evolutionary hierarchies and insurmountable racial difference.¹⁵ Despite the differences in their approach, then, all these authors agree that a strongly held view on empire and imperialism was characteristic of deportee thought.

It is certainly true that the deportees mentioned colonialism frequently, however their relationship to imperialism and colonialism was more complicated than these

¹² Bullard, *Exile to Paradise*, p.130.

¹³ For more on Algerian political prisoners in New Caledonia, see M. Ouennoughi, *Algériens et Maghrébins en Nouvelle-Calédonie: Anthropologie historique de la communauté arabo-berbère de 1864 à nos jours* (Algiers: Casbah Editions, 2008).

¹⁴ Baronnet & Chalou, *Communards en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.333; Mailhé, *Déportations en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.359. See also 'Débat: "La Commune: utopie ou modernité?"', in G. Larguier and J. Quaretti (eds.), *La Commune de 1871: utopie ou modernité?* (Perpignan: Presses universitaires de Perpignan, 2000), 407-424, at p.422.

¹⁵ A. Bullard, 'Self-representation in the arms of defeat: fatal nostalgia and surviving comrades in French New Caledonia, 1871-1880', *Cultural Anthropology* 12 (May 1997), 179-212, at p.205; see also at p.188.

previous approaches have suggested. In his *Mémoires d'un Communard*, Jean Allemane (later to become a prominent socialist *député*) criticised not only indigenous colonial collaborators,¹⁶ but also rebels against colonialism,¹⁷ as well as colonialism itself.¹⁸ Even the writer and activist Louise Michel, who has frequently been cited as the most sympathetic of the deportees to the Kanaks' plight, fluctuated between rage at the injustice of colonial settlement and a belief that the Kanaks were child-like and in need of education.¹⁹ As Ann Laura Stoler has persuasively argued in *Along the Archival Grain*, far from conforming to paradigms of either 'ignorance' or acceptance' of imperial realities, European agents of and ancillaries to colonialism made their lives in a 'more complex psychic space' of 'tacit ambivalences and implicit ambiguities'.²⁰ Thus it would be entirely possible for a deportee to decry, for example, colonialism and the Kanak rebellion. Rather than a consistent and strongly held view, deportees often expressed many apparently conflicted thoughts on empire.

Indeed, it is not immediately clear that the deportees gave extensive thought to the subject at all. Their references to colonialism notably contained frequent factual inaccuracies. In the case of the Algerian Kabyle deportees, Rochefort's collaborator Oliver Pain suggested that 'there are sincere republicans among them',²¹ whilst in fact motivation for the Kabyle Rebellion had been largely aristocratic and sprung partly from their refusal to submit to republican (as opposed to royal or imperial) authority.²² Given that such mistakes were easily rectifiable and the deportees were elsewhere extremely

¹⁶ J. Allemane, *Mémoires d'un Communard, des barricades au bagne* (Paris: Librairie Socialiste J. Allemane, 1880), p.239.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.426

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.419.

¹⁹ Contrast, for example, the 'egalitarian' attitude in Fonds Louise Michel Moscou, International Institute of Social History (IISH), 233, 5-2, p.4; p.17; with L. Michel, *Souvenirs et aventures de ma vie* (ed.) D. Armogathe (Paris: La Découverte/Maspero, 1983. First published 1905-1908), p.75.

²⁰ A.L. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp.248-249.

²¹ Mailhé, *Déportations en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.403.

²² See Ouennoughi, *Algériens et Maghrébins*, pp.55-121; Mailhé, *Déportations en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.77.

concerned with accuracy,²³ they seem rather to indicate a lack of sustained intellectual interest in empire and colonial questions. While deportation may have introduced the deportees to a variety of other cultures, such a widening of geographic and cultural horizons did not necessarily prompt an increased interest in ideas of empire. Although they were of course aware of and even engaged in colonialism in their role as ‘colonial agents’, it seems that it was not as central to their experience or thought as has previously been suggested.

It was rather to the French republic that writings on deportation often turned, with deportees using their experiences in New Caledonia as evidence of the Third Republic’s unfitness to rule. Rochefort’s newspaper, *L’Intransigeant*, for example, wrote disparagingly that French colonial government ‘is practically military dictatorship...It considers settlers to be its subjects and treats them accordingly’,²⁴ while in an open letter seventeen deportees claimed that in the colonies, ‘the soldier reigns as absolute master, without serious control, and without real responsibility’.²⁵ Such vocabulary and references were certainly colonial, however the target of the criticisms was clearly not colonialism itself, but the French government. For the deportees, French colonialism was problematic because of its culture of militarism and its lack of accountability or popular involvement. In other words, it was a contravention of French republican values and virtue, and exposed the Third Republic as a government of ethical compromise.

The deportees’ evaluations of colonial economy and production were similarly designed to highlight the failings of metropolitan government. Paschal Grousset and Francis Jourde complained that ‘[c]ommerce and industry...are subject to all the restrictions that the French military administration is so good at augmenting’, suggesting

²³ See, for example, ‘Rochefort! Found At Last’, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 May 1874.

²⁴ ‘Ce qui se passe en Nouvelle-Calédonie’, *L’Intransigeant*, 1 September 1880. For a similar criticism, see E.-A. Ballière, *La Déportation de 1871: Souvenirs d’un évadé de Nouméa* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1889), pp.256-257.

²⁵ ‘Appel des transportés de la Commune aux Comités républicains de Paris’ (undated), Fonds Lucien Descaves, IISH, 135, p.5.

that the New Caledonia's status as a penal colony took precedence over its economic development.²⁶ By contrast, many deportees looked favourably upon British colonialism.²⁷ In his memoirs, for example, Achille Ballière contrasted Australia favourably with Senegal.²⁸ In identifying the cause of this colonial economic stagnation as a combination of authoritarian power and neglect, deportees were able to use these seemingly remote problems to criticise the performance of the metropolitan government. Contrasting their own experiences with official claims about the profitability of imperialism, they called into question the government's fitness to lead the country and its claims to have France's best interest at heart, casting doubt upon not only its loyalties but more importantly its capability.

This approach proved potent largely because of metropolitan France's own ambivalent attitude toward imperialism during this period. Despite the high visibility of the colonial lobby, both the general public and many French politicians remained unconvinced of its value. Deputies from across the political spectrum dismissed imperial expansion as an unnecessary distraction from problems closer to home, whether the social question or the recent loss of Alsace to Germany,²⁹ and the public remained largely unwilling to leave the metropole to settle the colonies.³⁰ This *status quo* inadvertently gifted the returning deportees with a unique position in French politics. While few in France had any real experience of empire, by contrast many of the deportees had spent

²⁶ P. Grousset & F. Jourde, *Les condamnés politiques en Nouvelle-Calédonie: récit de deux évadés* (Geneva: Imprimerie Ziegler & Co., 1876), p.41. For a similar criticism, see H. Rochefort, *L'Évadé: Roman canaque*, 2nd edn (Paris: Charpentier, 1880), p.3.

²⁷ Others such as Tocqueville and Leroy-Beaulieu also made comparisons with British colonialism. For Tocqueville, see J. Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Liberal Imperialism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp.219-26; for Leroy-Beaulieu, see D. Todd, 'A French imperial meridian, 1814-1870', in *Past & Present* 210 (2011), 155-186, at p.183.

²⁸ E.-A. Ballière, *La Déportation de 1871: Souvenirs d'un évadé de Nouméa* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1889), p.177.

²⁹ For more see Conklin, Fishman, and Zaretsky, *France and its Empire*, pp.67-68.

³⁰ J. Pitts, 'Liberalism and empire in a nineteenth-century Algerian mirror', *Modern Intellectual History* 6 (2009), 287-313, at p.312.

the best part of a decade in a colony, expressly acting as agents ‘in the service of France’s larger colonial project’.³¹

This apparent knowledge placed them in a position to influence what Matt Matsuda has called ‘the “tides” of ideology and imagination that are so much parts of empire’.³² The colonial lobby, desirous of increased support, was eager to deflect criticism and present empire in the best possible light. The power that this supposed unique knowledge and experience gave the deportees can be glimpsed, for example, in the government’s willingness to accede to a torture inquiry following the amnesty,³³ and in letters such as one from Allemane to the Minister for Colonies threatening, ‘if by some miracle, I see my complaint ignored, my moderation will transform into a tireless protest against all those who have let slide unpunished these acts’.³⁴

Indeed, this focus is unsurprising given the government’s own motivations for deportation. Deportation had been central to the government’s handling of the aftermath of the Commune. The legal exclusion of the convicted Communards from France was an effective alternative to the immediate official retaliations during the *Semaine Sanglante*, which had, according to Karl Marx, ‘shocked the nerves even of the not over-sensitive London *Times*’.³⁵ Deportation, though, was also a visual demonstration and reaffirmation of the government’s authority. Although nominally inclusive and egalitarian, the early Third Republic was very much a State, following Giorgio Agamben’s definition, ‘not founded on a social bond of which it would be the expression’, but on

³¹ Toth, *Beyond Papillon*, p.37.

³² Matsuda, *Empire of Love*, p.16.

³³ For demands, see Grousset & Jourde, *Les condamnés politiques*, pp.57-58.

³⁴ Allemane, *Mémoires d’un Communard*, p.501.

³⁵ K. Marx, *The Civil War in France: Address of the General Council of the International Working-Men’s Association* (London: Edward Truelove, 1871), p.15. See also D. Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism: A Study of the Political Activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French Socialist Movement 1870-90* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1971), p.26.

the power of exclusion.³⁶ In a circular letter for 6 June 1871, for example, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jules Favre stated that

‘To detest [the events of the Commune]...and to punish them is not enough. It is necessary to seek out the germ of them and to extirpate it. The greater the evil, the more essential it is to take account of it...To introduce into laws the severities which social necessity demands and to apply these laws without weakness are novelties to which France must resign herself. For her, it is a matter of safety.’³⁷

Deportation was by no means the only way in which the Third Republic asserted such power, but it was nonetheless a dramatic demonstration of both their authority and the lengths to which the government was willing to go to suppress dissent and preserve order. It was thus inextricably bound to the ways in which the government hoped to define their new republican State – a new moderate, constitutional, territorial republic in which revolutionaries had no place.

The deportees, though, did not merely use their experiences of deportation to criticise the Third Republic; they also put the details of their own lives in New Caledonia to theoretical use. Much attention has been given to both ‘the enormity of the punishment’,³⁸ and the negative aspects of life in New Caledonia, with deportation interpreted as profoundly traumatic; a ‘void’ in which ‘the present appeared only as absence, as a tormenting reminder of what was missing.’³⁹ The experience of New Caledonia, though, was not all bad. Alongside their indictments of the penal and colonial administration, deportees emphasised their own attempts to build a community. Those deported to the Ile des Pins established theatre groups and several newspapers,⁴⁰ which

³⁶ G. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, (trans.) M. Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p.86.

³⁷ J Favre quoted in J.T. Joughin, *The Paris Commune in French Politics, 1871-1880*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1955), vol.1, p.67.

³⁸ L. Godineau, *Retour d'exil: Les anciens Communards au début de la Troisième République* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2000), p.513.

³⁹ Bullard, ‘Self-representation in the arms of defeat’, p.193.

⁴⁰ For the theatre, see Baronnet & Chalou, *Communards en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.357; for newspapers, see *ibid.*, p.360.

not only occupied the unemployed deportees, but also, it was suggested, helped to create new fraternal bonds. Recalling his arrival on the Ducos peninsula from the prison on Ile Nou, Allemane wrote that ‘there were hands clasping ours, hugging us, even people that we didn’t know. We were all one family’.⁴¹ By stressing this success in building communities, especially in what they elsewhere described as inhospitable conditions and under such punitive authorities, the deportees were attempting to turn their backs on the damaging infighting that had very publicly plagued the revolutionary movement both before and during the Commune.⁴² Deportation, then, was not only a negative experience, but also functioned as an important site of reconciliation for the deported Communards (as well as for their comrades in exile and sympathisers in France⁴³).

The deportees were also eager to reassert their own republicanism, in fact using their expulsion from France to emphasise their commitment to republican values.⁴⁴ Some, such as Grousset and Jourde, even elevated their commitment to quasi-religious heights, describing republican deportees as ritual sacrifices made in order to ‘appease the insatiable monster of monarchism’.⁴⁵ Despite the distance from metropolitan France and the treatment they had received in New Caledonia, the deportees implied, they had managed to retain (even develop) their republican values. Whereas distance, they suggested, had only augmented their values, it had by contrast exposed the government’s ethics and republicanism as deeply flawed. Dwelling upon deportation thus functioned

⁴¹ Allemane, *Mémoires d’un Communard*, p.472. See also, 220: Louise Michel, published in the *Revue australienne*, in L. Michel, *Je vous écris de ma nuit: correspondance générale – 1850-1904* (Paris: Les Éditions de Paris, 1999), 219-221, at p.220.

⁴² See, for example, J. Allemane, *Mémoires*, p.237; ‘Rocheport: His Lecture at the Academy of Music’, *New York Herald*, 6 June 1874.

⁴³ For the appropriation of deportee experiences, see Joughin, *The Paris Commune in French Politics*, vol.1, p.88. For an example, see *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.32. For relations between revolutionary socialists and radical republicans regarding Rocheport’s escape, see ‘European Life’, *New York Herald*, 26 April 1874, p.8; Matsuda, *Empire of Love*, p.121. On the amnesty campaign, see Allemane, *Mémoires d’un Communard*, p.497.

⁴⁴ ‘Rocheport’, *New York Herald*, 30 May 1874, p.3. For further comparisons, see 65: Messenger – Blanche, Château d’Oléron, 17 October 1871, in H. Messenger, *239 lettres d’un Communard déporté: Ile d’Oléron – Ile de Ré – Ile des Pins* (Paris: Le Sycomore, 1979), 92-93, at p.93.

⁴⁵ Grousset & Jourde, *Les condamnés politiques en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, pp.54-55.

as a way for the deportees to reaffirm their ideological proximity to the French nation, whilst simultaneously imbuing their years in exile with value. It enabled them to cast themselves as guardians of republican values and argue that, while they may have been outside the State, they remained the keepers of the republic and thus an essential part of French metropolitan life.

In projecting such an image of newfound responsibility, it could be assumed that the deportees unconsciously carried out the government's professed aims for deportation. Yet while the idea of the deportees as responsible communitarians operating in adversity may certainly have appealed to the contemporary French mainstream, it also resonated with significant aspects of nineteenth-century radical thought. From the Saint-Simonians' Algerian settlements to Fourier's *phalanstères* and the Owenite communities of New Lanark and New Harmony, the idea of creating new communities based on revolutionary ideals was well established.⁴⁶ It was also popular, and revolutionary newspapers often carried reports on contemporary utopian settlements such as Étienne Cabet's Iowa Icariens and the Oneida Community in New York.⁴⁷ The community created and lauded by the deportees in New Caledonia was thus not only designed to establish their suitability for public life, but was also a practical reinforcement of revolutionary ideas on the government of the republic. By emphasising the apparent success of this self-governing, self-regulating society, the deportees directly challenged the form of government established by the Third Republic and offered a practical demonstration of the federalist contention that meaningful change was effected not at a national level by an increasingly centralised government, but from within the community. If society were

⁴⁶ For the Saint-Simonians and Algeria, see O.W. Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Ouennoughi, *Algériens et Maghrébins*, pp.63-67.

⁴⁷ For the Icariens, see *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 20 May 1877, pp.3-4.; for Oneida see *Le Travailleur* 1:6 (October 1877), pp.16-20.

correctly attuned, then centralised government would be at best an unnecessary imposition and at worst, dictatorship.

Rather than a sustained interest in imperial expansion or settler colonialism, the deportees' ideas on France and the structure of the State are demonstrative of the on-going battle to define the French republic in the late nineteenth century. Instead of attempting to reinsert themselves back into the Third Republic upon their return, the deportees used their experiences to contest what the republic was. Whereas the government conceived of 'the Republic' as a system of government; a constitutional, legal, and territorially defined structure, the deportees used their writings on New Caledonia to contend that 'the republic' was a state of mind rather than a State. A republic was not a specific form of government, it was the organic harmony of society correctly functioning – a set of ideals centred on virtue, sacrifice, and harmonious community life. The deportees' reflections on their experiences thus acted simultaneously to cement their own place in the republic and as an affirmation of the continuing right to rebel, for if the republic were truly a set of values, its defenders must retain the right to protect it from any State including the Republic itself.

For the deportees, colonialism and imperialism did not represent independent or fully realised avenues of thought, but were rather intimately tied to their ideas on the condition of France and their position in French politics. Colonialism and empire were intellectual and political bargaining chips, providing an easy and effective way for the deportees to regain prominence in French public life, simultaneously rendering their time in 'the wilderness' relevant and justifying their continued political opposition to what was now at least nominally a republican government. Rather than assimilating into the Third Republic, deportees responded creatively to official efforts to use deportation to exclude them from the nation. Turning both their geographical isolation from France and their quotidian experiences in New Caledonia to their advantage, they used such experiences

to construct an alternative republic that was both theoretically distinct from the Third Republic and politically viable. In this formulation, the deportees and France became ‘the republic’, while the government was transformed into an outsider. Empire was thus not so much *peripheral* to the deportees’ thought, but rather part of a broader debate that was much more important to them: that on the nature of the State and the French Republic.

II

While the deportees experienced colonialism firsthand in New Caledonia, it is to revolutionary socialists in Europe that one must look for more concerted thought on empire and internationalism. The deportees’ predicament likely helped widen awareness of the subject. News from New Caledonia was published in influential papers such as the *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, and exiles launched several highly coordinated efforts to aid the deportees.⁴⁸ Those in London, for example, began a permanent subscription for the aid of the deportees in 1874 that was both nationally and internationally advertised.⁴⁹ With the help of exiles in Belgium, Switzerland, and America, by April 1877 the London committee had raised 6000 francs.⁵⁰ Indeed, an agent from Paris’s Préfecture de Police claimed that the New Caledonia aid committee was the ‘one organised group among the exiles in London’.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 15 March 1874; 5 April 1874; 18 October 1874; 21 March 1875; 28 March 1875; 27 June 1875; 31 October 1875; 28 November 1875; 11 November 1877.

⁴⁹ ‘Souscription permanente, ouverte à Londres, pour les condamnés politiques à la Nouvelle Calédonie’, Archives de la Préfecture de Police (APP), Ba427/93; Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police (London, 16 February 1877), APP, Ba429/2128; 2314. For instances of its international advertisement, see for example *Le Travailleur* 1:1 (May 1877); *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 9 December 1877.

⁵⁰ *Le Travailleur* 1:1 (May 1877), p.30.

⁵¹ Police report (5 December 1878), APP, Ba430, 3170.

Revolutionary socialist interest in international affairs, however, was not confined solely to events in New Caledonia. The *Bulletin* published updates on South American socialists in Mexico and Uruguay,⁵² and explored their links with those in Berne,⁵³ while intelligence reports on exiles in Geneva and Belgium contained details of connections to New York and China.⁵⁴ Communard exiles, then, were fully aware of the contemporary importance and all-encompassing nature of imperialism. Indeed, by 1886 the Parisian daily *La Bataille* was arguing that '[i]n these times of industrial development, he who lives by the colony will die by the colony.'⁵⁵ While concerned with their compatriots in New Caledonia, French revolutionary socialist interests ranged far wider than the South Pacific. Communard exiles and their European comrades were both embedded within international intellectual networks and cognisant of the importance of empire and imperialism in a broader sense.

The second part of this article explores the presence of empire and internationalism in the thought of the French revolutionary socialists who managed to evade capture and deportation following the fall of the Commune. Imperial and international questions and connections peppered a wide variety of publications, but I shall focus upon the two journals in which ideas on international questions were most systematically developed. Published in Geneva from May 1877 to May 1878, *Le Travailleur* was the product of collaboration between exiled anarchist and federalist revolutionaries of several nationalities, primarily French and Russian. At the time, Geneva was one of Europe's most prominent anarchist centres, home to an international

⁵² *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 24 December 1876. See also 'Bulletin politique', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 7 May 1883.

⁵³ *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, for similarities with the International, see 26 December 1875; for links to Berne, see 10 December 1876.

⁵⁴ Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police (Belgium, 28 May 1876), APP, Ba427/385; Intelligence report (Geneva, 16 January 1874), Ba432/953. For mention of Cluseret's visit to China, see Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police (Geneva, 12 March 1873), APP, Ba431/580.

⁵⁵ *La Bataille*, 4 January 1886.

array of exiles and located firmly within the anarchist Jura Federation's sphere of influence.⁵⁶ *Le Travailleur* dealt extensively with imperial and transnational subjects and, although the majority of these articles were written by either the former Communard Élisée Reclus or Lev Mechnikov (both anarchist geographers), all of the most prominent French revolutionary socialist exiles in Switzerland contributed articles and sat on the paper's editorial board.⁵⁷

While the Geneva exiles were publishing prior to the amnesty, *La Bataille* appeared several years later, once the majority of ex-Communards had returned to France. It was published daily in Paris under the editorship of Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray, a former Communard and author of the wildly popular *Histoire de la Commune*, and aimed primarily at socialist revolutionary members of the city's working class. The first series ran from 1882-1886, and unlike the ephemeral revolutionary newspapers of the early 1870s, it covered a broad subject matter and apparently employed a considerable staff.⁵⁸ While of course it is impossible to precisely determine the views of its readers, articles on colonialism and empire featured regularly in *La Bataille*'s pages, thus exposing its audience to such concerns. Although published second of the two newspapers, *La Bataille*'s ideas on empire and internationalism were considerably more conventional than *Le Travailleur*'s, and in the interest of clarity it shall thus be discussed first.

At first glance, *La Bataille* seems to have adopted a critical attitude towards imperialism. Lucien-Victor Meunier, for example, praised the Algerian scholar and military leader Abd al-Qadir, asking the readers to 'consider him...not as an enemy, but a patriot',⁵⁹ and the paper also participated in the widespread condemnation of Jules Ferry

⁵⁶ For more on *Le Travailleur*'s links to the Jura Federation, see D. Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism: A Study of the Political Activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French Socialist Movement 1870-1890* (London: Cox & Wyman, 1971), p.107.

⁵⁷ *Le Travailleur*, 1:7 (November 1877), p.1.

⁵⁸ From October 1882-May 1883 it became *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, but retained *La Bataille*'s staff and style rather than *Le Citoyen*'s.

⁵⁹ *La Bataille*, 29 May 1883.

and the 1885 Tonkin affair.⁶⁰ In an article addressed to the French troops in Tonkin, Lissagaray wrote:

‘You are in Tonkin to defend our Cochinchinese border. If you manage to maintain that, they will send you to China to defend our Tonkinese border for...one colony leads to another. If you conquer China, they will send you to Russia in order to defend our Chinese border, and then nothing will stop you being sent to Germany to ensure the safety of our hold on Russia.’⁶¹

For Lissagaray and *La Bataille*, contemporary French imperialism was a process of permanent and ever increasing acquisition with no discernible benefit. Moreover, imperialism echoed modern industrial exploitation, proving relatively safe for the capitalist but extremely dangerous for the workingman – in the case of this article, the army private. Not only, then, were Ferry’s and the colonial lobby’s immediate political decisions regarding imperial expansion regrettable, but for *La Bataille*, imperialism was apparently theoretically unacceptable from a socialist standpoint.

French imperialism, however, according to *La Bataille* was not only ineffective, but also actively detrimental to citizens’ rights in the metropole. On the first Franco-Hova War, which marked the beginning of the French colonisation of Madagascar, Lissagaray asked the government:

‘Why did the Chamber spend a month studying the pros and cons in your name just to change everything? What is the point of deliberations if they are not taken into account? Your parliamentary regime is nothing...if you cannot submit to the rulings that you yourselves pronounced...During the Empire public deliberations on matters of peace and war were nothing but a farce, and you are now showing us that the same can be said for the Republic.’⁶²

For *La Bataille*, imperialism and domestic politics were inextricably linked, and the government’s bad decisions abroad affected both the colonies and France. French imperialism was unacceptable as it involved political and ethical compromises that

⁶⁰ For more on the widespread criticism of Ferry’s colonial ventures, see T. Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Politics and Anger* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.267.

⁶¹ *La Bataille*, 12 December 1883.

⁶² *La Bataille*, 24 December 1885.

actively corrupted the political process and the French republic, and infringed upon French citizens' democratic rights. Their opposition derived from the fear that imperial expansion gave reign to authoritarian tendencies incompatible with a French republic.

Alongside these criticisms of the French colonial lobby, though, *La Bataille* also displayed a theoretical enthusiasm for colonial expansion. In August 1883, it claimed that '[t]he importance of colonisation in Africa is, happily, today understood by all intelligent citizens',⁶³ and it had no qualms about the European expropriation of African natural resources.⁶⁴ This colonial enthusiasm was also evident in *La Bataille's* views on the British Empire, which it praised for having 'always known how to apply exactly the correct laws to suit the temperament, customs, religion, and indigenous civilisation of each of their individual colonies'.⁶⁵ For Lissagaray, the problem with French imperialism was that it was neither effective nor democratically sanctioned. Although *La Bataille* heavily criticised the practice of French imperialism, then, this did not correlate to a corresponding theoretical opposition. Rather, it supported the right of Europeans to colonise, but merely disagreed with the French colonial lobby's ways of exercising this right.⁶⁶ French imperialism was bad not because imperialism itself was bad, but because its current incarnation was damaging to the French State.

Indeed, *La Bataille's* support for imperialism extended further than abstract belief in its hypothetical possibilities. It was argued that effective imperialism was not only desirable, but vital to the maintenance of France's well being. Discussing the colonial economy in December 1883, Lissagaray admitted that colonisation did not make for ideal economic markets, however he continued:

⁶³ *La Bataille*, 8 August 1883.

⁶⁴ *La Bataille*, 4 January 1886.

⁶⁵ *La Bataille*, 12 May 1885.

⁶⁶ For a similar historical view, see Eichner, '*La citoyenne* in the world', pp.71-72; p.75.

'If our domestic economy were better, if French industry could take up its tools and get itself once more to the level of other nations, if our taxes were better distributed, if our industry and commerce were not dependent upon the caprices of the railway bosses and their tariffs, *our deputies would not need to send you to Tonkin or anywhere else.*'⁶⁷

While Lissagaray accepted that colonisation in order to force the sale of French products was an unsatisfactory state of affairs, then, he did not suggest a termination of the practice. Rather, he argued that such action was necessary in order to protect French jobs and the French economy and called for a reform of colonial practices to increase their profitability.

Lissagaray and his staff were certainly critical of the form that the colonial lobby's (and Ferry's in particular) imperial policies took. Unlike the deportees, however, who employed imperial metaphors simply as a method of commenting upon domestic French affairs, *La Bataille* endorsed both the theory and fact of imperial expansion as not only beneficial, but necessary to the continued prosperity and international standing of France. Furthermore, while *La Bataille*'s journalists praised, for example, Abd al-Qadir's patriotism, their 'positive' assessments of other cultures were not accompanied by a belief in the right to self-rule.⁶⁸ In this respect, *La Bataille*'s position was proximate to that of the radical feminist socialist Hubertine Auclert's *La Citoyenne* (founded in Paris in 1881), which endorsed expansive French republicanism as an agent capable of bringing about universal female enfranchisement.⁶⁹ For *La Bataille*, European superiority was never in doubt. It remained the only means by which to rule effectively and, combined with their concern for French workers, this rendered imperial expansion (as for the colonial lobby) both a right and a moral duty.

Appearing some four to five years before *La Bataille*, *Le Travailleur* nevertheless expressed some of the same suspicions about the French empire. Addressing the

⁶⁷ *La Bataille*, 12 December 1883. Emphasis mine.

⁶⁸ *La Bataille*, 12 May 1885.

⁶⁹ Eichner, 'La citoyenne in the world', p.71

problem of the limits of colonisation, the first issue worried that ‘the dream of Universal Empire constantly plays on the minds of heads of State. The more they possess already, the greater fury of acquisition they have’.⁷⁰ A year later the paper highlighted the elite’s exploitation of workers in the name of imperial wars, mockingly asking in an article on the Tsar and the Russo-Turkish War, ‘[a]ren’t all the millions spent, all the men killed worth it for his glory?’⁷¹ It is thus possible to discern a certain degree of unity on empire amongst the deportees, *La Bataille*, and *Le Travailleur*. All three shared many of the same concerns, such as the exploitation of the worker and the effects of imperialism upon Western governments. In particular, all three were united in their opposition to the current form of French imperialism.

Unusually, though, *Le Travailleur* also raised ethical objections to colonialism. Reporting on a communist revolt in Mexico, the periodical highlighted the hypocrisy of colonial possession, asserting that ‘[t]he rebels wanted to reclaim the land that the whites had *stolen* during the conquest’.⁷² The classification of land accumulation during the Spanish colonisation of the Americas as ‘theft’ suggested that for *Le Travailleur*, conquest was not a legitimate mode of acquisition, but a crime. Indeed, in the September 1877 issue, one of *Le Travailleur*’s journalists stated categorically, ‘I do not believe that conquest can ever be justified’.⁷³ Given the centrality of the moral right to conquest to justifications of late nineteenth-century imperialism, *Le Travailleur*’s opposition to it implied an opposition to the idea of empire, rather than simply to its current French iteration. *La Bataille*’s and *Le Travailleur*’s criticisms of French colonialism, then, were at once similar and fundamentally different. While many of their objections to the practical realisation of imperialism were the same, the basis for these criticisms was not. *Le Travailleur* recognised the problems with France’s practical implementation of imperial

⁷⁰ *Le Travailleur* 1:1 (May 1877), p.12.

⁷¹ *Le Travailleur* 2:2 (February-March 1878), p.2.

⁷² *Le Travailleur* 1:6 (October 1877), p.9. Emphasis mine.

⁷³ *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.17.

ideas, yet it also called the legality of colonisation into question, and its disavowal of French imperialism was based also on a rejection of its theoretical foundation.

It was not only the right to conquest that *Le Travailleur* attacked, but also the credence of notions of Western superiority. For *Le Travailleur*, a variety of different cultures were just as advanced as those of Europe. Reclus suggested that '[t]he political organisation of the Kabyles' was 'the ideal of democracy',⁷⁴ and in an article on China, Mechnikov wrote that '[w]hile in western Europe, labour associations remain the exception, they have been the rule for centuries in the far East.'⁷⁵ These other cultures were not merely equal to Europe's, but often superior. Reclus, for example, claimed that 'utopia is already a reality south of the Mediterranean' in Algeria, 'the promised land of association'.⁷⁶ While it was not particularly unusual for European theorists such as Ernest Renan to refer to non-Western societies and even sometimes praise them, *Le Travailleur's* approach was subtly, but significantly, different. As Karuna Mantena has demonstrated, non-Western cultures were typically praised as once mighty civilisations that had long since atrophied or decayed, and were thus in need of European protection.⁷⁷ *Le Travailleur* specifically refuted these suggestions, arguing by contrast that non-Western civilisations such as China and Kabylia had retained their greatness.⁷⁸ For *Le Travailleur*, the future ideal society was not merely an expansion of European modernity; elements of it were to be found everywhere.

Notably, *Le Travailleur* went further than acknowledging parity; it also recognised connections and similarities. As one editorial argued:

'Questions of production and consumption are the same everywhere; mountains and oceans may delimit regions and determine the character and activity of the

⁷⁴ *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.19.

⁷⁵ *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.24. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁶ *Le Travailleur* 1:6 (October 1877), p.15.

⁷⁷ K. Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁷⁸ *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.21.

producers, but mountains and oceans do nothing more to change the situation of workers than artificial frontiers do.⁷⁹

The universal power of the worker to determine their own destiny superseded both borders and the power of international markets. *Le Travailleur*'s journalists returned frequently to this theme, often implying that these similarities were not merely superficial, but deeply ingrained in a kind of universal workingman's consciousness.⁸⁰ European and non-Western civilisations and cultures were not only equal, but more importantly were fundamentally alike.

For *Le Travailleur*, solidarity was primarily based not upon nationality or civilisational superiority, but upon class and profession. In this matter, it positioned itself against the kind of interracial hostilities that had already broken out in cities such as San Francisco, declaring, for instance, that '[t]his terrible *yellow question* is a corner into which the bourgeois regime has pushed civilisation.'⁸¹ As Reclus argued, universal workers' solidarity was not merely beneficial, but natural and inescapable:

*'Solidarity is no mere sentiment; it is a law of nature. We have been mistaken in not considering the barbarians of Algeria as our brothers, and we have been victims of our own prejudices and egotism.'*⁸²

Universal proletarian solidarity, *Le Travailleur* argued, was thus the natural state of the worker, whereas the regional solidarities and protectionism of publications like *La Bataille* were products of, rather than solutions to, exploitative industrial modernity.

In order to combat such manipulation, it was necessary for the worker to realise that 'the misery of one proletariat and another are the same' and unite:⁸³

'Up until now, prejudiced labourers have taken out their anger on other unfortunate people. They have fought like gladiators in the arena while the masters

⁷⁹ *Le Travailleur* 1:1, (Geneva, May 1877), p.2

⁸⁰ See, for example, *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.28.

⁸¹ *Le Travailleur* 2:4 (April-May 1878), p.17. Emphasis original. See also *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.29.

⁸² *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.22. Emphasis mine.

⁸³ *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), pp.28-9.

*watch the massacre. Labourer fights labourer...And now, Chinese, Americans, and Europeans are meeting each other on the same battlefield. Will they massacre each other, snatching the bread from each other's mouths...or will they, believing in the same ideas, unite?*⁸⁴

If solidarity were a law of nature defined along professional or class lines, then logically the international bourgeoisie were also united. Given that both socialism and capitalism were universal phenomena, interracial hostilities were detrimental to the workers' cause everywhere. For Western workers to damage the interests of their non-Western counterparts was thus to be trapped in the masters' arena, too busy fighting each other to notice the true, common enemy – to strengthen the hand of their foe and perpetuate their own oppression by failing to elaborate a viable alternative to the current system. Although imperial expansion may have superficially benefited the European worker by providing a captive market for their products and thus temporarily securing their jobs, social revolution ultimately could not be realised within such parochial boundaries.

It should be noted that there remained limits to this proto-anticolonialism. While *Le Travailleur* opposed the exploitation of other cultures and nationalities, it maintained support for what it called 'true colonisation' – a quasi-Lockean appeal for the proper use of land.⁸⁵ Moreover, despite its pleas for unity, the paper simultaneously retained a belief in the hierarchy of races, asserting, for example, that '[o]ne should not compare [Algeria] to the virgin lands whose inhabitants are in an infant state. The Berbers have conserved the tradition of an old civilisation'.⁸⁶ It is also worth pointing out that *Le Travailleur* never provided column inches for colonial subjects to advance their own ideas. While *Le Travailleur* may not have been 'imperialist' in the sense of having a concerted system of

⁸⁴ *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.31. Emphasis mine.

⁸⁵ *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.24. This was a fairly regular criticism, for example see also 'Tong-king', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 11 December 1882. On Locke and colonialism, see D. Armitage, 'John Locke: theorist of empire?', in *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 114-131.

⁸⁶ *Le Travailleur* 1:6 (October 1877), p.16. See also *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.27.

domination,⁸⁷ it must nevertheless be remembered that it was neither opposed to all forms of colonisation nor convinced of the equality of all races.

Le Travailleur was also by no means the first French publication to express ethical objections to empire. *Le Travailleur*'s views had historical precedent, from Robespierre's preference for principles over colonies, to Constant's *De l'esprit de conquête* and Hamdan Khodja's liberal Algerian pamphlet, *Le Miroir*, which was the first publication to make an ethical case for complete French withdrawal from Algeria.⁸⁸ In many ways, *Le Travailleur* could be said to represent a return to earlier criticisms of conquest by the likes of Diderot and Constant.⁸⁹ Where *Le Travailleur* departed from this tradition was its belief that progress must be brought about by unity and universal solidarity, rather than merely equality. Whilst for Constant and others, the good of the nation remained the basis of concern, *Le Travailleur* advocated greater transnational affinity rather than national protectionism or isolation. For *Le Travailleur*, European imperialism represented a violation of natural law, and both the colonial stage and colonial actors were vital rather than ancillary to revolution. The rights of the worker and the rights of the nation were to be realised not through protectionism, but through truly international solidarity, and an anticolonial stance was thus both politically and ethically necessary.

III

Although they proposed wildly different solutions to the problem, at the heart of *Le Travailleur*'s, *La Bataille*'s, and even the deportees' thought on contemporary

⁸⁷ For this differentiation, see Armitage, 'John Locke: theorist of empire?', *Foundations*, 114-131, at p.115.

⁸⁸ On Khodja, see Pitts, 'Liberalism and empire in a nineteenth-century Algerian mirror'.

⁸⁹ D. Diderot, *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*, (ed.) P. Jimack (London: Grant & Cutler, 1988. First published, 1772).

imperialism lay a critique of industrial modernity. For those in power, competition led only to insecurity and consequently further acquisition, while capitalists' determination to acquire workers' bodies and labour at the lowest possible price prompted interracial strife amongst the workers themselves.⁹⁰ Indeed, this critique of industrial society was extremely widespread in contemporary French works on empire. Contrary to the government's claims, modernity and 'progress' as exemplified by the endless process of acquisition that was imperial expansion, it was suggested, brought neither happiness nor social harmony.⁹¹ Even those who endorsed the supremacy of Western civilisation, such as *La Bataille*, were wholly unsatisfied with its current state. Although, as we have seen, French revolutionary socialist thought during this period encompassed a variety of positions on empire, their basis was largely the same. All were concerned with how to improve the worker's lot, and all approached imperialism as a close relation or by-product of industrial modernity.

This engagement with imperialism was more successful for some than others. *La Bataille's* criticisms of the colonial lobby's policies were both strident and visible, however the paper's protectionist stance dulled the impact of its criticism. As opposed to *Le Travailleur's*, *La Bataille's* issues with French imperialism sprang ultimately from nationalist concern not for 'the worker', but exclusively for the *French* (or at a push, European) worker.⁹² The circumstances in which each paper appeared undoubtedly influenced these stances. While *Le Travailleur* was published in a likeminded community of international exiles, *La Bataille* was targeted primarily at French (mainly Parisian) workers and competing for readers in a crowded market of revolutionary socialist newspapers. Although this context goes some way towards illuminating the reasons for *La Bataille's* position on imperialism, such a stance nonetheless highlighted the limits of

⁹⁰ *Le Travailleur* 2:4 (April-May 1878), p.19.

⁹¹ A. Regnard, 'Les Mensonges conventionnels de notre civilisation', *La Revue socialiste* (1886), 697-706, at p.697.

⁹² 'Colonies et travailleurs', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 18 May 1883.

its supposedly universal values. The paper preached solidarity and universal republican values, but in reality this solidarity ceased at the borders of the West. It considered the rising 'moral level' of Hindus brought about by English culture in India 'a danger',⁹³ and deemed British bankers' plans to finance Chinese industrialisation 'treason', recommending that in retaliation, English proletarians 'string up the English financiers who gave the Chinese this loan' and sabotage Chinese production in order to protect the European worker.⁹⁴ *La Bataille's* engagement with empire and international questions effectively confined them to a national framework for social change and visibly demarcated the practical limits to their professions of universal solidarity and fraternity.

This position with regard to the rest of the world was in fact extremely proximate to the government's own. As we have seen, *La Bataille's* (and indeed many other revolutionaries⁹⁵) opposition to contemporary French imperialism sprang from the conviction that the Third Republic was not doing imperialism properly. As Jennifer Pitts has argued in relation to liberal critics of French expansion under the July Monarchy, such an intellectual position based wholly upon the well being of France was neither effective nor sustainable, for it was ultimately derivative and could be easily undermined by changes in the government's fortunes in the colonies.⁹⁶ *La Bataille's* international thought, which focused solely on empire and its possible benefits for the metropole effectively conformed to modern societal standards, undermining claims that they offered a fresh alternative to the current order. Speaking from within the bounds of contemporary society, they were unable to offer an alternative to the binary colony-metropole paradigm established by the government's own ideas on imperialism.

⁹³ *La Bataille*, 12 May 1885.

⁹⁴ *La Bataille*, 5 January 1886.

⁹⁵ See, for example, 'Les naufrageurs', *Le Citoyen*, 12 November 1881; 'Gaspillage partout', *Le Citoyen*, 19 December 1881; 'L'alliance avec Arabi', *Le Citoyen*, 26 July 1882; Anon, *Les déportés civils de Gomen. Nouvelle Calédonie* (Paris: Imprimerie Nouvelle Association Ouvrière, 1871), pp.15-16.

⁹⁶ J. Pitts, 'Republicanism, liberalism, and empire in post-revolutionary France', in Muthu (ed.), *Empire and Modern Political Thought*, 261-291, at p.264.

Le Travailleur's interest in international affairs, by contrast, was truly transnational. For *Le Travailleur*, as for the writer Albert Regnard, imperialism was nothing but the 'preoccupations of a decadent patriotism', and the paper warned its readers to beware of its apparent perks, urging them (as it urged the French government) to consider the less fortunate.⁹⁷ Discussing the future, Mechnikov stated:

'The world has been made small by the network of railways and steamboats that cross it. Different peoples are more and more becoming neighbours, multiplying their points of contact...From their diverse and even opposing elements, they will gradually form a new race *where all races will be united*.'⁹⁸

Unlike *La Bataille*, for *Le Travailleur* the world was defined not by borders, but by the increasing mobility and unity brought about by travel and technological innovation. The establishment of connections between a wide variety of national proletariats was encouraged and their own international connections, for example in Algeria, were often discussed in the periodical.⁹⁹ In promoting the establishment of transnational networks and overlooking national borders, *Le Travailleur* both enlarged and shrunk the scope of politics and revolutionary action, reducing it to the trope of the individual worker. *Le Travailleur's* worker was defined not by their country, but by their profession, forcing readers to identify common ground between themselves and others and reflect upon the possibility of a universal common good.

In the sense that their interest in world affairs was more transnational than imperial, *Le Travailleur* was in fact similar to the deportees. Although they gave little sustained thought to imperialism and spent much of their time abroad in the South Pacific, the deportees' associations were not restricted to the territorial confines of New Caledonia. Primarily for the *évadés*, but also for deportees who briefly experienced other

⁹⁷ Regnard, 'Les Mensonges conventionnels', p.697.

⁹⁸ *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.30.

⁹⁹ *Le Travailleur* 1:6 (October 1877), pp.15-6.

countries on their voyages, deportation proved to be a truly transnational affair.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, these new transnational revolutionary solidarities were increasingly reflected in their political actions. Following their return to Paris, for example, many of the deportees began a campaign for the amnesty of Algerian political prisoners.¹⁰¹

Although their primary focus remained France, similarly to *Le Travailleur*, deportees increasingly situated themselves within a wider, more transnational context.¹⁰² Crucially, while both the deportees and revolutionary socialists such as those at *Le Travailleur* (for *Le Travailleur* was by no means alone in holding such views¹⁰³) involved themselves extensively with international actors and affairs, these engagements were not defined or bounded by the concept of ‘empire’.

It is of course possible, even likely, that revolutionary socialist uses of empire and transnationalism ultimately often served to reinforce colonial hierarchies and the popularity of imperialism, however this was arguably not their objective. By expressing their admiration for other cultures and establishing connections with a wide variety of other nationalities, both *Le Travailleur* and the deportees radically undermined the theoretical basis of imperialism and the Third Republic. As Greg Denning has observed, ‘[b]eing different challenges definitions of what being civilised might be.’¹⁰⁴ The deportees’ affinities with strangers (in particular colonial strangers) presented a direct theoretical challenge to the colonial system of hierarchies and assimilation. In

¹⁰⁰ Ballière, *La Déportation de 1871*, p.125; ‘Discours des citoyens Paschal Grousset et Francis Jourde, ex-membres de la Commune de Paris, prononcés au banquet qui leur a été offert par des Républicains de San Francisco le 24 mai 1874’, Fonds Lucien Descaves (IISH), 205; O. Pain, *Henri Rochefort (Paris – Nouméa – Genève)*, (Paris: Périmet, 1879), pp.614-615. For the *New York Herald*, see, for example ‘The Rochefort Manifesto’, *New York Herald*, 2 June 1874; ‘Rochefort’s Manifesto’, *New York Herald*, 3 June 1874.

¹⁰¹ Mailhé, *Déportations en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.403; ‘L’Amnistie pour les Arabes’, *L’Intransigeant*, 8 August 1880.

¹⁰² ‘Rochefort’, *New York Herald*, 30 May 1874, p.3.; O. Pain, *Henri Rochefort*, p.617.

¹⁰³ See, for example, ‘En Afrique’, *L’Émancipation*, 22 November 1880; ‘La politique coloniale’, *Le Citoyen*, 21 September 1882; ‘N’oublions pas le but’, *Le Citoyen*, 7 October 1881; ‘L’Internationale bourgeoise et l’internationale ouvrière’, *Le Citoyen*, 13 March 1882.

¹⁰⁴ G. Denning, *Readings/Writings* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998), p.158.

highlighting these attributes, *Le Travailleur* provided hope to its readers that progress was possible outside of the contemporary European paradigm, and turned the notion of the civilising mission on its head. If, as *Le Travailleur's* examples suggested, European civilisation was not superior to all others, then far from civilising savages, European colonial expansion was retarding world progress and the dissemination of worthwhile ideas. To define oneself and one's actions as transnational was thus to subvert the boundaries set by modern industrial society, whereas to be an imperialist was not.

Le Travailleur's interest in international affairs thus reflected and enhanced their demands for a radical reordering of society. Japanese ownership and Kabyle democracy provided ideals on which European society could hope to remodel itself, and their unusual opposition to imperialism reinforced the decentralised society proposed by many of the Swiss exiles as an antidote to industrial modernity and centralised political power. Whereas *La Bataille* remained tied to national political questions, *Le Travailleur's* transnational solidarity and the radical possibilities it engendered enabled them not just to bypass contemporary political debates, but also to make a virtue of this marginality, at the same time also rendering the idea of revolution more accessible. By highlighting political and social systems currently in operation in other parts of the world as potential models for a viable alternative society, revolutionaries directly contradicted the belief that all societies must pass through a unilinear model of historical development (whether in the form of the civilising mission or historical materialism). Rather, the revolution should take the form of a 'hydra of socialism', manifesting itself in different guises according to circumstance, and its work could therefore be begun everywhere immediately.¹⁰⁵ A transnational approach thus empowered small, marginal groups (such as revolutionaries during this period), enabling them to challenge the bases of government and society whilst not logically compromising other aspects of their thought.

¹⁰⁵ *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.30.

Imperial and international concerns, then, featured prominently in the thought of French revolutionary socialists at the beginning of the Third Republic. Although scholars have previously approached these themes almost exclusively through the writings of Communards deported to New Caledonia, they featured as much, if not more, in the thought of revolutionary socialists who remained in Europe. Whereas deportees overwhelmingly used their experiences in New Caledonia to comment on the state of the French republic and to reintegrate themselves into metropolitan political life, revolutionary socialists such as those at *La Bataille* and *Le Travailleur* offered more clearly elaborated ideas on empire and internationalism. The divergent focus of these theories had radically different implications for revolutionary socialists' wider bodies of thought. Whereas *La Bataille's* adoption of a conventionally republican colonialism highlighted the limits of their universalist discourse, *Le Travailleur's* advocacy of transnational affinities rather than imperial expansion logically cohered with and reinforced their ideas on societal organisation and international solidarity, indicating that they were committed to finding a solution beneficial to workers not only in Europe but the world over. It is thus possible to locate revolutionary socialists during this period within wider traditions of anticolonial and liberal imperialist thought.

Whilst revolutionary socialists engaged extensively with the imperial experience, whether through deportation or through coverage of international issues, though, the concept of 'imperialism' itself remained vague in their thought. Certainly, as Stoler has suggested, the idea that historical actors either did not think about colonies or should have opposed them is a false antithesis.¹⁰⁶ In fact, this study casts doubt upon the

¹⁰⁶ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, pp.248-249. See also A.L. Stoler and F. Cooper, 'Between metropole and colony: rethinking a research agenda', in F. Cooper and A.L. Stoler (eds.),

supposed European ‘certainty’ regarding empire in the period of high imperialism. None of the revolutionary socialists examined in this article had a clearly defined or delineated theory of empire. For the deportees, colonial examples provided a way to reflect on the republic, *La Bataille* remained primarily concerned with the fate of the French worker, and even at *Le Travailleur*, imperialism was subsumed by the larger issue of transnational solidarity – which was not necessarily anticolonial. Indeed, this tendency can be glimpsed in many socialist movements well into the twentieth century, perhaps most notably Leninism, in which colonialism was approached exclusively through the concept of economic imperialism, in other words as a form of monopoly. For revolutionary socialists, then, ‘empire’ was not a discrete category of thought. Rather, it was inseparable from other concerns, both domestic and global.

The study of empire and internationalism, then, is both more and less than it has often been depicted as. Empire was at once intertwined with and absent from revolutionary socialist ideas. Awareness of the ways in which Europeans in this period approached and interacted with the wider world is surely essential for understanding both the historical development and the limits and possibilities of such thought, and this has long been realised by historians working on empire. At the same time, however, the very ambiguity and imbrication of ideas on empire highlights limitations to the utility of ‘empire’ and ‘the colonial’ as categories of analysis, and of their ability to capture the complexities of international and transnational thought. In the case of French revolutionary socialists in the early Third Republic, attempts to locate imperialism as either a central or a peripheral concern fail to elaborate the breadth of their engagement with questions concerning the wider world. International and transnational thought during this period transcended imperial frameworks. Though imperialism pervaded

every area of revolutionary socialist thought, it cannot be isolated from broader concerns as they attempted to locate the limits of their struggle within local, national, and global frameworks.